



University of Connecticut
College of Agriculture and Natural Resources

Testimony in support of HB 5746
Establishing a Task Force on Childhood Obesity

February 26, 2013

Cooperative
Extension Center

New Haven County
Center

Dear Chairperson Gerratana, Chairperson Johnson and Public Health Committee Members:

I fully support HB-5746 to establish a task force on childhood obesity. In the United States, 27% of U.S. children and adolescents are overweight or obese. Current Youth Risk Surveillance Data reveals little improvement in physical activity, fruit and vegetable consumption or change in body weight. Nationally, one out of three youth are overweight or obese; childhood and adolescent obesity has tripled from 1980 to 2012; and one in three children are obese or overweight by their 5th birthday. According to Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, obesity has increased by 27% in the United States; Connecticut obesity has climbed to 22%, not far behind the U.S. average. In comparison to the nation, only 50% of Connecticut's sixth graders are able to pass all Four Presidential Fitness Tests. Unfortunately, sixth graders in several cities and towns throughout Connecticut are ranking less than 50% passing rates for fitness tests. The magnitude and implications of childhood obesity are daunting and translate into multiple health issues that continue to magnify throughout adulthood; unchecked, obesity will be rampantly affect the health of families and children, impacting our ability to have healthy contributing members of this great state and nation.

I work with University of Connecticut College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Department of Extension. We are the outreach of the university, located in each county of the state. We are committed to improving the lives of Connecticut citizens from farm to table through Teaching, Research and Extension. We work with families, individuals, youth, and communities in rural as well as urban areas. Recently, we were awarded a National Institute of Food and Agriculture Grant to Prevent Childhood Obesity; our program, CT Fitness and Nutrition Clubs (CT FANs) is a 4-H Afterschool Program in which teenagers and adult leaders will teach and conduct nutrition, fitness and gardening activities. Along with our grant partners, the NEAG School of Education's Department of Kinesiology, we will measure impacts upon students and families. Our team will offer assistance, feedback and participation with the proposed Childhood Obesity Task Force. We will continue to be a resource to the Connecticut's citizens as well as the proposed task force to address this public health epidemic.

Sincerely yours,

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